

RECOGNIZING PAUL WEBSTER FOR  
50 YEARS SERVING WITH HOUS-  
ING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT

**HON. GERALD E. CONNOLLY**

OF VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Thursday, December 22, 2022*

Mr. CONNOLLY. Madam Speaker, it is my honor to recognize a leading figure in the practice of community and economic development, Mr. Paul Webster.

Mr. Webster serves as the Director of the Financial Management Division in the Office of Community Planning and Development for the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. Mr. Webster's commitment to public service is unparalleled, his five-decade-long career focused on creating resilient communities, suitable living environments, and economic opportunities for low- and moderate-income persons and families.

Mr. Webster joined the Department in 1972 and has served as Director since 1983. In this role, Mr. Webster oversees the Section 108 loan guarantee program, a transformational program and resource for low-income communities, including funding for critical economic development projects and facilitation of affordable housing solutions that would otherwise not be possible.

He spearheaded the expansion of the Section 108 program. Over the course of his career, Mr. Webster has overseen an unprecedented 2,000 loan guarantee commitments with a total value close to \$10 billion. These numbers underscore his work to provide the much-needed resources that revitalize American communities and ensure everyone has a chance to succeed.

Mr. Webster also championed legislation that established the Economic Development Initiative (EDI), which provided grant funds to support and enhance the use of Section 108 loan guarantees and the subsequent Brownfields EDI to help address environmental cleanup efforts, returning contaminated property to sustainable use. His expertise also extended to long-term disaster recovery work and neighborhood stabilization activities targeted at addressing the effects of abandoned and foreclosed housing.

He is one of the leading experts on financial management and is happy to provide guidance and advice to individuals, organizations, and federal, state, and local partners for the Department. Equally important, Mr. Webster has been and continues to be a mentor to the next generation of community development and financial management professionals, reflected in the esteem of his colleagues, staff, and external partners.

Madam Speaker, I ask that my colleagues join me in honoring this remarkable public servant, whose expertise, tenacity, and creativity in economic and community development has helped to transform hundreds of communities for the better. Paul Webster has tirelessly dedicated himself to making life better for countless Americans. I hope his continuing legacy inspires us all to renew our commitments to serving our communities.

RECOGNIZING RANIA  
ALAFIOYIANNIS

**HON. CAROLYN B. MALONEY**

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Thursday, December 22, 2022*

Mrs. MALONEY of New York. Madam Speaker, I rise to congratulate Rania Alafioyannis for her outstanding contributions to the fields of e-commerce, marketing, advertising, and customer sales and development. Ms. Alafioyannis is a groundbreaking entrepreneur with a vibrantly diverse background and a myriad of achievements.

Ms. Alafioyannis obtained a Bachelor of Arts in Psychology and Communications from Hofstra University in New York. She continued on to earn a master's degree in Media Ecology from New York University in 1997.

After completing her education, Ms. Alafioyannis dedicated herself to further professional development by working with a number of notable communications companies. She served as an intern for Technology Solutions, New York, National Greek Television, and HBO.

Ms. Alafioyannis has held positions with Shandwick International, Hill and Knowlton, Inc., and OTE International where she served as Head of Corporate Reputation for two years prior to becoming Head of Corporate Communications. In this role, Ms. Alafioyannis directed the communications programs for OTE International's investment activities in Southeastern Europe. Ms. Alafioyannis went on to work with OTE—COSMOTE (Hellenic Telecommunications), where she assisted with the implementation of the company's residential marketing and advertising programs, with an emphasis on broadband & fixed telephony products and services.

In 2017, Ms. Alafioyannis founded JEWELSOPHY, an international jewelry design company conducting wholesale and retail trade of fine and demi-fine jewelry based in Athens, Greece. Ms. Alafioyannis was driven to build this company based on her desire to design and create jewelry inspired by the rich culture and timeless symbols of the ancient Greek civilization.

Ms. Alafioyannis' work has been recognized a number of times. In 1999, Ms. Alafioyannis was the recipient of the Creativity in Public Relations Award (CIPRA). She also received the 2001 SABRE Award. Ms. Alafioyannis currently serves as Vice President of the Euro-America Women's Council (EAWC).

Madam Speaker, I ask my colleagues to join me in recognizing Ms. Rania Alafioyannis for her outstanding achievements and contributions to the fields of communication and commerce.

HONORING THE LATE DR.  
MILDRED FAY JEFFERSON

**HON. LOUIE GOHMERT**

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Thursday, December 22, 2022*

Mr. GOHMERT. Madam Speaker, we are blessed in the First District of Texas to have been home to a multitude of extraordinary individuals who have made significant impacts

upon not only the State of Texas and our nation, but the entire world. One of those east Texans is whose life we honor today, the late Dr. Mildred Fay Jefferson.

Dr. Jefferson was a young prodigy raised in the town of Carthage, Texas. Her early education was complete before she reached the age of fifteen, graduating from Carthage Colored High School—later known as Turner High School—in 1943.

The determined young woman obtained a Bachelor's degree in Medicine from Texas College at the age of eighteen, then completed her Master's degree in Biology from Tufts University in 1947. Dr. Jefferson then conquered the odds and earned her M.D. from Harvard Medical School in 1951, making her the first African American woman to graduate with that degree from the Medical School.

After becoming a medical doctor, Dr. Jefferson continued to make history with a long string of "firsts" for women—including the first woman to serve on staff of Boston City Hospital, the first woman to be granted membership in the Boston Surgical Society, and the first female surgeon general at Boston University Medical Center.

Dr. Jefferson married former Navy Lieutenant Shane Cunningham in 1961. After their divorce in 1978, Dr. Jefferson turned her life to activism by establishing the Massachusetts Citizens for Life Counsel.

A 1970 decision by the American Medical Association to allow member physicians to perform abortions ethically in states where the procedure was allowed sparked a passion in Dr. Jefferson's soul, as she viewed this decision as abandoning the Hippocratic Oath which demands a doctor to "do no harm." She began a nationwide outcry against abortion.

Dr. Jefferson helped form the Value of Life Committee which was one of the organizations that initiated the national "right-to-life" movement which endures today. She quickly became one of the most sought after and fervent spokespersons in the nation to represent the pro-life stance. In 1981, Dr. Jefferson testified before Congress as a result of the historic 1973 Supreme Court case *Roe v. Wade*.

Dr. Jefferson was quoted as saying, "I became a physician in order to save lives, not to destroy them." She also said, "I am not willing to stand aside and allow this concept of expendable human lives to turn this great land of ours into just another exclusive reservation where only the perfect, the privileged, and the planned have the right to live."

The National Right to Life Committee (NRLC) was co-founded by Dr. Jefferson in 1973. She then entered the world of politics, running for the U.S. Senate from Massachusetts in 1982, 1990, and 1994.

Dr. Jefferson was honored with twenty-eight honorary degrees from numerous universities and colleges. Although Dr. Jefferson passed away at the age of eighty-four on October 15, 2010, her life's mission continues today. She will be forever remembered as one of the most notable and unwavering crusaders for the rights of unborn children.

It is truly a distinct privilege to honor this remarkable woman, whose exceptional life, steadfast devotion, and landmark accomplishments will endure as long as there is a United States of America.

RECOGNIZING THE 20TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE NATIONAL SPINE HEALTH FOUNDATION

**HON. GERALD E. CONNOLLY**

OF VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Thursday, December 22, 2022*

Mr. CONNOLLY. Madam Speaker, I rise today to ask that my colleagues join me in congratulating the National Spine Health Foundation on its 20th anniversary.

In 2019, according to the Center for Disease Control, about 39 percent of the U.S. population suffered from chronic neck or back pain. Those numbers increased to 44.8 percent in adults below the federal poverty level. Back pain is also the number one cause of missed workdays, the leading cause of job-related disability and pain in the U.S., and the most common non-cancer related reason for an opioid prescription in the U.S. It is no small wonder that spine problems caused by inactivity and neglect during the COVID pandemic have resulted in increased opioid use for pain.

The National Spine Health Foundation is the only national patient-centered non-profit dedicated to helping patients overcome debilitating spinal conditions and take back their lives. During the past 20 years, the Foundation has developed award winning patient education, advocacy, and research to give patients the tools they need to make informed decisions about their spine health and navigate their own treatment journeys with confidence. It has been well documented that better-informed patients have better outcomes. Knowledge is powerful medicine.

The Foundation's Medical and Scientific Board includes 50 of the top spine specialists in the nation. These spine specialists provide their insight, knowledge, and expertise to help patients understand their options so they can make informed decisions concerning their spine wellness, problem prevention, and surgical and non-surgical treatments.

The Foundation has proven their commitment to spine health research. Patient-reported outcomes have been part of the NSHF fabric since its inception. As they are deeply invested in supporting evidence-based healthcare decision-making, it is important that they take part in finding this evidence. Their trademarked cloud-based 'Spine-online' research tool enables them to conduct multicenter studies and partner with research teams both in the U.S. and internationally, including active studies on robotic surgery, enhanced surgical recovery, augmented reality, stem cell therapy, and more.

Madam Speaker, in the U.S. and globally, musculoskeletal conditions affect more people than any other condition. I ask that my colleagues join me in congratulating the National Spine Health Foundation's 20-year commitment to all those individuals who suffer from spine and back issues.

HONORING FRANCES MUÑOZ, OUR NATION'S FIRST LATINA JUDGE

**HON. J. LUIS CORREA**

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Thursday, December 22, 2022*

Mr. CORREA. Madam Speaker, I rise today to honor the life of Frances Muñoz, our Na-

tion's first Latina judge. Judge Frances Muñoz died on October 17, 2022, of natural causes. She was 92 years old.

Judge Frances Muñoz has the distinction of being the first Latina female appointed or elected to the bench in California and the first Latina female appointed or elected as a trial court jurist in the United States. She served for 23 years in the Orange County Municipal and Superior Courts and an additional 15 years as an Assigned Judge.

From humble beginnings, Frances was born at the height of the depression on September 18, 1930, the 5th of 11 children, in the mining town of Miami, Arizona. The family moved to Puritan, Colorado, and her father continued to work in the coal mines until the mines "played out."

In 1941, the family moved to Corona, California, and joined the thousands of others working in farm labor. Frances and her siblings joined their parents in the fields during the summers picking tomatoes, grapes, and other crops in the Fresno area, sometimes sleeping outdoors.

Judge Muñoz inspired her younger siblings to study and pursue higher education. After high school, she went to work selling furniture and she paid for the college expenses of her siblings.

Undaunted, Judge Muñoz pursued her own education by attending night classes at Los Angeles City College, UCLA and law school while managing Atlas Furniture stores during the day. In 1972, Judge Muñoz received her law degree from Southwestern University School of Law where she was a member of Law Review.

She moved to Orange County, where her brother Greg, a graduate from USC law school, had opened a practice. Greg later became an Orange County Superior Court judge and served alongside Frances on the bench.

In 1972, Frances joined the office of the Orange County Public Defender, where she was the first Latina and the second woman to be hired in that office.

In 1974, she and several Latino attorneys established the Orange County Mexican-American Lawyers Club, which was later renamed the Hispanic Bar Association of Orange County. One of their goals was to ensure that more Latinos, who were qualified and experienced, be appointed or elected to the bench. As a result of their efforts, today there are 19 Latino judges out of 124 Superior Court Judges on the Orange County bench and two Latino justices out of eight Appellate Court justices in Orange County.

On January 25, 1978, Governor Jerry Brown's office telephoned Frances Muñoz to advise her that she had been appointed as a Judge in the Harbor Municipal County in Orange County. She was not at her desk. She was in court representing a defendant in a felony jury trial.

As a Deputy Public Defender, she was known as a zealous advocate. But she was also noted for being civil with opposing counsel and respectful of the court. She was also acknowledged for creating and meticulously cataloging 3x5 cards in a small box. On each card she wrote out the facts and holding of the appellate court in key cases involving "furtive gestures," "search of trunk," and other criminal law issues. She would quickly retrieve a key citation during a motion or trial.

Within months of her appointment, she was opposed by a male Deputy District Attorney.

Several Harbor Municipal Court judges, and multitudes of Orange County attorneys, court staff, bailiffs, police officers, and clergy rallied around her to host fundraisers and to support her in the retention election. Her 10 brothers and sisters and their children and parishioners from her church, St. Joachim Catholic Church in Costa Mesa, canvassed neighborhoods to get out the vote. In that 1980 election, Judge Frances Muñoz was retained with the largest plurality of votes of any challenged judge in the state. Four other judges in Orange County lost their seats that year. She was never challenged again.

In 1980 and 1990 she was elected the Supervising Judge of the Harbor Municipal Court and in 1990 was also recognized as the Outstanding Judge of the Year by the Orange County Women Lawyers Association. In 1976, she co-founded the Orange County Hispanic Education Endowment Fund which awards college scholarships to Latino scholars.

In 2001, Judge Muñoz retired from the bench, but continued her public service as an assigned judge until 2016. She also served on the board of directors of THINK—Teaching, Helping, Instructing Kids and boards of other non-profit organizations.

Every Thursday she would tutor students at Santa Ana's Madison Elementary school. She was also a keen real estate investor who purchased several commercial and residential properties. She always accommodated nieces and nephews in her spacious Corona Del Mar home while they studied and earned their bachelors, masters or medical degrees at the University of California, Irvine.

Judge Muñoz is survived by four sisters, Margaret Muñoz, Vera Muñoz-Harrison, Rosie Schirling, and Angie Quintana, and 25 nieces and nephews and 45 great nieces and nephews.

Please join me in celebrating the long, accomplished life of Judge Frances Muñoz. She will be remembered for her perseverance in the face of adversity, excellence as a law student, attorney and judge, for her lifetime dedication to public service and children's education, and for her compassionate and gracious spirit.

HONORING THE SERVICE YASHA NIKITIN

**HON. MICHELLE STEEL**

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Thursday, December 22, 2022*

Mrs. STEEL. Madam Speaker, today I honor the career and accomplishments of one of my constituents.

Yasha Nikitin has dutifully served the City of Huntington Beach and its police force for over 20 years. In his time with HBPd, he has protected our community as a police explorer, a student worker, a police cadet, an officer, and a sergeant. He has also served his fellow officers as a board member and president of the Huntington Beach Police Officer Association.

On January 10th, after all of his years of service protecting our friends and neighbors, Yasha will be promoted to Police Lieutenant. Our police are vital to the safety and success of our communities, and we are incredibly fortunate to have as fine a person as Yasha serving on the Huntington Beach Police force.